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**Testimony of Cheri Quickmire,
Executive Director, Connecticut Common Cause
Before Government Administration and Elections Committee
February, 18, 2009**

Good morning Senator Slossberg, Representative Spallone and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. My name is Cheri Quickmire, and I am the Executive Director of Common Cause in Connecticut. Common Cause is a nonpartisan, nonprofit citizens' lobby that works to improve the way Connecticut's government operates. We have more than 7,500 members and activists in Connecticut.

Connecticut Common Cause supports the following legislative proposals:

SJ 42 Resolution Amending the State Constitution to Allow Early Voting.
HB 5012 An Act Implementing Early Voting in Connecticut.
HB 6435 An Act Concerning Election Day Registration.
HB 6437 An Act Concerning An Agreement Among the States to Elect the President of the United States by National Popular Vote.

Connecticut Common Cause opposes Section 10 of the following legislative proposal:
HB 6440 An Act Concerning Certain Revisions to Elections Related Statutes

Common Cause supports SJ 42 Resolution Amending the State Constitution to Allow Early Voting and HB 5012 An Act Implementing Early Voting in Connecticut.

We all witnessed the remarkable turnout in this last Presidential election. Even more remarkable than the voters who lined up to exercise their right to vote on Election Day were the 40 million voters who voted before Election Day. This translates to thirty percent of the total voting! Colorado had the highest early voter turnout at 79.3%; Pennsylvania had the lowest at 4.1%. Connecticut Common Cause supports 'no excuse' absentee and early in-person voting.

There are various strategies to permit early voting:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 32 states allow no-excuse pre-Election Day in-person voting - either early voting on a voting machine or in-person absentee voting. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 14 states and the District of Columbia require an excuse for in-person |

absentee voting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 state, Oregon, is all vote-by mail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28 states allow no-excuse absentee voting by mail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 states and the District of Columbia require an excuse to vote absentee by mail

HB 6435: An Act Concerning Election Day Registration. Common Cause supports Election Day Registration (EDR), sometimes called "Same Day Registration" as a simple way Connecticut can encourage voter participation. EDR allows eligible voters to register and cast a ballot on Election Day. Eight states allow voters to register to vote at their polling place on Election Day - (Montana (passed in 1960), Maine, Minnesota, Wisconsin (1970s), Wyoming, Idaho, New Hampshire (1990s), Iowa (2007) Rhode Island allows it for presidential elections only and North Carolina (2007) allows new voters to register and vote on the same day during an early voting period just prior to Election Day.

We just witnessed an extraordinary surge in voter participation in the 2008 election and while we do not have final data on EDR usage in the 2008 presidential election, according to Demos, over 1 million Americans used EDR to vote on or before November 4, 2008. This is an opportunity we should seize and build upon.

- **74% of Eligible Voters** participated in states with Election Day Registration, compared to only 60% in non-EDR states.
- **Top Four States for Turnout in '04 had EDR** -- Minnesota (78%), Wisconsin (75%), Maine (73%), and New Hampshire (71%). The fifth highest state was Oregon -- the universal vote-by-mail state.
- **Turnout is Higher Even When Controlling for Competitiveness** -- "Safe" states with EDR significantly outperformed "safe" states without EDR in terms of voter participation. "Battleground" states with EDR significantly outperformed "battleground" states without EDR in terms of voter participation.

Election Day Registration functions to increase turnout among certain segments of the population more likely to encounter registration problems:

- **People Who Move** -- Huge portions of the population move between Presidential elections. In many cases, especially for people who move frequently, updating voter registration is easy to forget. EDR ensures that mobile doesn't have to mean immobilized.
- **Young People** -- Young voters are a huge beneficiary of EDR in part because they move so often. States with Election Day Registration have noticed large surges in youth voting.

- **Historically Disenfranchised Voters** -- Voters who have faced discrimination historically are still among the most likely to face registration errors, often through no fault of their own.
- **Eligible Voters Mistakenly Purged from Voting Rolls** – Allows them to cast a meaningful ballot.

EDR counteracts arbitrary voter registration deadlines. Voter registration deadlines vary from state to state and seem to have little bearing on smooth elections. 28 states close off voter registration 25 or more days before the election – well before the media and the public have given real attention to the races.

EDR is cost-effective and easier for elections officials to administer than provisional ballots. Elections are no more expensive to administer in EDR states than in non-EDR states. A 2007 survey of local election officials in EDR states – New Hampshire, Maine, Idaho, Wisconsin, Wyoming and Minnesota describe the incremental cost of EDR as minimal.

EDR does not encourage voter fraud. A recent analysis of 2002 – 2005 data from EDR states found very little evidence of voter fraud. And the great majority of local elections officials participating in EDR states rated current fraud-prevention measures sufficient to protect the integrity of elections. 2

EDR can be a secure and easy way to register voters, and one that can dramatically improve turnout rates. Connecticut could potentially benefit from 10 point increase in voter participation and make it one of the states with the best voter turnout.

HB 6437 An Act Concerning an Agreement Among the States to Elect the President of the United States by National Popular Vote.

Common Cause supports HB 6437 which will direct Connecticut to join the pact of states who have agreed to elect the President by National Popular Vote.

We need a system where everyone's vote counts equally. Under the National Popular Vote (NPV) plan, states agree to allocate all of their electoral votes to the candidate who receives the most votes in all 50 states, but **only if states with a combined total of 270 electoral votes join the agreement.** Just as in every other election, every citizen's vote would count then equally.

The current system for electing our president no longer serves America well. Under this system, candidates try to win states, not individual voters. The state-by-state method for choosing presidential electors (Electoral College) divides the country into so-called "safe" states, where voters are all but ignored, while the election is determined by a relatively small number of swing voters in "battleground" states. Connecticut has become somewhat irrelevant in presidential politics, as candidates choose to spend their limited time and resources in states with a greater number of Electoral College votes.

At least 70% of Americans support moving a system of electing the president using the national popular vote.

The Constitution directs each state to select presidential elections however it sees fit and states have used a variety of methods for doing so throughout history. The Constitution also authorizes states to enter into binding agreements. So, states can mutually agree to use the national popular vote to choose electors within the existing constitutional framework. Hawaii, New Jersey, Maryland and Illinois have already passed bills to participate in this pact.

HB 6440 An Act Concerning Certain Revisions to Elections Related Statutes

We agree with the State Elections Enforcement Commission that changes to Section 10 of this bill will weaken the voting process and are unwarranted. The potential for fraud in the absentee ballot process is well known and various strategies to eradicate it have been attempted. Following a near unanimous vote in the House and Senate, an agreement was reached and procedures were developed in collaboration by the Town Clerks' Association, ROVAC, the Secretary of the State and the SEEC. A pilot program was conducted in 2003. These procedures should not be repealed.

The need for protections of those most often targeted for undue influence, including elderly, limited-English speaking and disabled voters was well documented and the procedures developed and incorporated into law provide the paper trail necessary to identify abuses. We oppose the limiting of accountability, and fear for the increase in claims of abuse.

1. Gronke, Paul, The Early Voting Information Center at Reed College,
<http://www.earlyvoting.net/states/abslaws.php>
2. Demos: A Network for Ideas and Action, Election Day Registration: A Ground Level View (November 2007), http://www.demos.org/pubs/EDR_Clerks.pdf.
3. Demos: A Network for Ideas and Action, Election Day Registration: Voters Win with Election Day Registration (Winter 2009).